

Fiji national day

Economic, social progress lead to celebration of new dawn

Isikeli Mataitoga
AMBASSADOR OF FIJI

It is with great pleasure and honor on this memorable occasion that I extend, on behalf of the president of the Republic of Fiji, the government and people of Fiji, warm greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, and the members of the Imperial Household, as well as to the government of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and the people of this great nation, Japan. I also extend warm greetings and "bula vinaka" to all Fijians and friends of Fiji in Japan.



Fiji general election

On Sept. 17, 2014, the Fijian people held an election and

elect a democratic government under the 2013 constitution. Prime Minister Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama was sworn in as prime minister after his Fiji First Party won 32 of the 50 seats in the new Fijian parliament. The election was observed by a multinational observer group (MOG), which contained a Japanese representative. Their verdict was that the election was a free, fair and credible reflection of the will of the people. A new dawn has begun in Fiji and we all look forward with renewed vigor to a bright and prosperous future.

I thank the government of Japan for its financial support toward the recently held general elections in Fiji and the participation of its representative in the MOG. Let us hope that the next step in Fiji-Japan relations will ensure a more consultative and partnered approach in the management of

that relationship.

Fiji-Japan relations

The government and people of Fiji are grateful for the warm and cordial relations that have existed between our two countries since we established diplomatic relations 44 years ago. Japan has assisted Fiji and its people in so many ways, through its overseas development assistance (ODA) program and private organizations undertaking projects in Fiji, all to the direct benefit of the Fijian people. This assistance is greatly appreciated by the government and people of Fiji.

Japan's aid & assistance

Japan is one of Fiji's important development partners in its economic and social sectors. Japan's ODA program extended through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) continues to provide valuable

assistance in terms of human resource development, through a grass-roots human security program focusing on environment-related projects and education in Fiji. More than 2000 participants from Fiji have participated in the JICA Training Program in Japan. Additionally, close to 700 JICA experts and 700 Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers have worked in or are currently working in Fiji in various fields of technical cooperation.

Each year an average of five to seven students have the opportunity to study in Japan under the government of Japan's scholarship cooperation. In times of natural disaster after cyclones or flooding, the government of Japan has always been generous in giving assistance to Fiji.

Trade & economy

As is the case with Japan, trade

and economic development is a priority for the Fijian government and cooperation with Japan is a key element to advancing our future sustainable development. In this regard, discussions are currently taking place for the development of a bilateral framework setting out guidelines for deepening trade and investment in specific sectors of the Fijian economy. This will further deepen Japan-Fiji trade and investment relations. We also acknowledge with gratitude Japan's resolve to deepen its bilateral relations with Fiji, as evidenced by the recent commitment to explore new ways to increase trade and economic cooperation between our two countries.

Fiji's trading ties with Japan are growing, showing an increase in total exports as of May 2014 to ¥456.2 million compared with ¥214.4 million in May 2013 due to increased re-exports of fresh fish. Similarly, imports increased by ¥327 million. We expect our trade relations to grow further in the years ahead. The economic and land reforms undertaken by Fiji have produced remarkable positive mid-term results in the last few years, registering significant growth in foreign direct investment.

Fiji welcomes new Japanese businesses and investors to be part of this growth and reward.

New vision

Fiji adopted a new constitution in 2013, which enshrines principles that are at the heart of the world's great liberal democracies — an independent judiciary, a secular state and a wide range of civil, political and socioeconomic rights. It recognizes the indigenous peoples of Fiji and their customary practices; protects rights of landowners and their tenants; demands accountability and transparency from government officials; builds strong and independent institutions; and replaces our old weighted electoral system with one based on the principle of one person, one vote, one value.

Responsible global citizen

Our nation is a beautiful island of tranquillity in the midst of worldwide upheavals. We have a compassionate and resilient people of many races who have learned to live together over the years despite their differences.

Fiji's commitment to being a good global citizen is manifested through its ongoing engagement with the United



Fiji Prime Minister Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama delivers Fiji's national statement at the 69th session of the U.N. General Assembly on Sept. 27 in New York. UNITED NATIONS

Nations and the leading roles it plays in advocating the voice of the smaller island states and least developed nations of the world in various world forums. This is being significantly attested to by its decision to take on the mantle of chairing the Group of 77 and China for the year 2013, thus, advocating that Fiji embraces its rights as an equal member of the U.N. guided by its foreign policy's core values of respect for each other's sovereignty, equality, fairness and openness.

Fiji supports world peace and the peaceful resolution of all disputes between nations.

Hence, our support for international peacekeeping missions around the globe under the U.N. banner, as currently evidenced by our commitment to UNDOF in the Golan Heights. Our servicemen and servicewomen have served with distinction in U.N. peacekeeping missions and some have paid the ultimate price for their services. On this day of memoriam, I pay special tribute to them for their selfless sacrifice in pursuit of world peace.

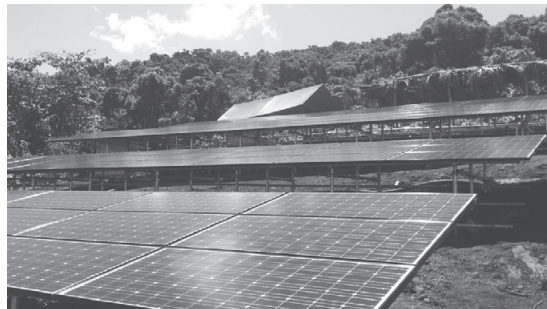
In the midst of our celebration, we as a nation must never forget to acknowledge and give thanks to the Almighty God for his tender mercies, which have enabled us to come this far, a nation poised for greater things.

May I extend our sincere appreciation to all our corporate sponsors, Fiji's Honorary Consular Corps in Japan, the Japan-Fiji Friendship Society, friends of Fiji in Japan and members of the Fijian community for their support and genuine commitment to the promotion of goodwill between Japan and Fiji.

Finally, my sincere gratitude to The Japan Times, whose generous support we have always received over the years and for allowing us this tremendous opportunity to celebrate Fiji's 44th Anniversary of Independence with its readers.

May God bless Fiji-Japan relations.

Congratulations in Celebration of the 44th National Anniversary of the Republic of Fiji



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Beyond the Boundaries

We Are Beginning the Next Era.



Congratulations to the People of the Republic of Fiji on the 44th Anniversary of Their Independence



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